

Testimony
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On the behalf of Capital Workforce Partners, I am here to testify on the State Youth Employment Program and our concerns over the elimination of the program in the Governor's budget.

This program elimination comes at a very difficult time for Connecticut's young people and families. Connecticut's youth employment figures are the worst since pre-World War II. According to Labor experts almost 50% of the new unemployment resulting from this recession over the next two years will fall on the backs of youth between 16 to 24 years-of-age. Our future workforce that we tout as a top State issue will be the biggest casualty to the elimination of the program.

As you are aware this \$5-million state youth employment program was eliminated in the Governor's budget primarily in considering that the Federal Economic Stimulus Bill might aptly support youth employment as a substitute funding vehicle. This must be reconsidered.

There are several reasons to reconsider this, and consider supporting the new State Bill (House Bill 5857) that has been raised by Rep. Kirkley Bey, Rep. Walker and Rep. McCrory – that would continue an allocation of \$4.5 million for the program.

It is critical to continue to support the State Youth Employment Program for a number of reasons, and given time constraints this evening we will focus on three major reasons in this testimony.

First, the State Youth Employment Program is not only a positive youth employment program serving thousands of young people in your municipalities, it indeed is an economic stimulus program because statewide, every summer we are developing

Connecticut's future workforce. Through this program we introduce thousands of youth to careers and employers in Connecticut and set them on the path toward becoming a well-educated, highly skilled workforce that the state can take advantage of in the not-so-distant future. Youth are taught valuable career competencies that the state's employers tell us are a must. And the program partners with schools all over the state to aid in career and college planning. Putting off this type of program will not only put off and squelch Connecticut's economic competitiveness – it might squelch it all together.

The majority of funds go to wages, stipends and incentives for youth that gets translated into direct funding spent back in the community. A week ago we held a Youth Employment Showcasing Forum at the Capitol's Hall of Flags, where a number of you (ie.: legislators) heard youths and businesses speak first hand about the benefits of the program. It was very enlightening to hear some youth speak about how meaningful it was for them to find work in their communities, bring home a pay-check for the family and contribute badly needed funds to support their family income.

Second, the State program serves over 3,500 youth in your communities who are eligible under the free and reduced lunch income guidelines. The federal program's Workforce Investment Act eligibility of federal poverty levels serves only the poorest of the poor. Under these guidelines it's difficult to understand how anyone can actually survive in a state like Connecticut. For example, a youth from a family of four whose head of household might be a CNA making \$12.50 an hour would not be eligible for the federal income guidelines. The federal WIA guidelines restrict opportunities to youth whose family income of a household of four to less than \$26,000. Whereas the state youth employment program enables a youth from a family of four earning up to a \$38,000. In addition the federal program focuses more attention on older, out of school youth and high-school drop outs and less on in-school youth. This means more funding per participant and more intervention versus prevention. It also means that local municipalities will be burdened with significant certification and documentation responsibilities.

This brings us to the third point. The state youth employment program has adopted the state framework of **Results Based Accountability (RBA)** based on the outcomes of increased school retention, career competency completion, and high school graduation. In the past year significant work has been completed by Workforce Investment Boards, the Office of Workforce Competitiveness, the Department of Labor and the State Department of Education that tracks several thousand participants through RBA – that indicates better results for youth employment participants in school retention, school drop-out and graduation rates than comparable students without youth employment experiences. Education reform is inextricably linked to the youth career competency strategies embodied in the state youth employment program. Given the future workforce imperatives of the State of Connecticut the youth employment intervention is a significant contributor to increased numbers of young people ready for the workforce.

In closing, we thank many of the state legislators who have made this a major program for between 40-50 municipalities throughout the state these past several years and thousands of young people who would never have had an opportunity like this. Young people in these youth employment programs have now become spirited in their excitement to become employed in your communities, and we caution everyone to understand that the federal economic stimulus program does not adequately replace the State program. If this program is disbanded most young people in your communities will not be served – and the positive outcomes built on the foundation of this program will not continue to be realized. We highly urge you to restore this line item and support House Bill 5857. The future workforce and quality of life in Connecticut depends on this!



CONNECTICUT
Workforce
Development Council

\$5 Million a Year to Energize and Strengthen Youth Employment Initiatives

Last year, the State was generous in making a \$5 million commitment for jobs and job-readiness training programs that employed 5,300* young people for the summertime and provided another 500 students statewide with year round employment and learning opportunities. These programs provide career exposure, work competencies development and work place experiences essential to the development of the state's future workforce pipeline.

The infrastructure and service models for youth development programs statewide have been building momentum and are achieving positive annual results. The funding and support afforded more young people summer opportunities as well as more year-round continuity for those who have made progress in the summer. The Connecticut Workforce Development Council thanks the State of Connecticut and is hoping to build on the momentum in 2009.

\$5-million for Youth Employment and Learning Programs

Benefit
Youths Served in 2008 – 5,300
Year Round Youths Served in 2008 – 550
Turnaways – 3,810 Placed on waiting list

* Includes participation with leveraged funds from additional Municipal, public and private foundations.

KNOW THE FACTS

A Comparison of the
Federal Economic Stimulus Package
and the
Connecticut Youth Employment & Learning Program

Connecticut Youth Employment & Learning Program	Federal Economic Stimulus Package
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Serves primarily in-school youth ages 14-19• 5,300 youth served in 2008 for \$5 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Primarily for out-of school youth with limited funding available for in-school youth
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Used as a Youth Development Career Competency certification tool with educational and career development outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Paid employment, work readiness (soft skills) outcome only
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Program design focused on meeting both youth and employer needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Goal is to push the money out into the hands of the youth in a “summer jobs” format
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eligibility requirements set at a family income qualifying for free and reduced lunch	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eligibility requirements set at or below federal poverty guidelines, which means only the poorest of the poor receive services
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Design is a mix of certification, program and work experiences to meet needs of employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Designed to be a straight forward “summer jobs” program with limited youth development, career certification or training.